

AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD BIKE NETWORK

Neighborhood Taskforce Meeting #1



MEETING SUMMARY

Austin Neighborhood Bike Network

Neighborhood Taskforce Meeting #1

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

5:00 – 6:30 pm

Virtual meeting; Microsoft Teams

ATTENDEES

CDOT Representatives

David Smith – Bicycle & Pedestrian Program Manager

Amanda Woodall – Divvy Program Manager

Brad Huff, TY Lin – Bikeways Program Manager

John Pickering, TY Lin – Bikeways Planner

Ethan Lassiter – Department of Planning

Shameka Turner, Sam Schwartz Engineering – Program Manager SAFE Ambassadors

Jane Wilberding, Sam Schwartz Engineering - Divvy

Johntuanay Johnson, Lyft – Outreach Coordinator Divvy

Taskforce Members

Alderman Taliaferro – 29th Ward

Bradly Johnson – BUILD

Jose Abonce – MBAC representative

Ethan Ramsay – Austin Coming Together

Ethan Lasider – Chicago Department of Planning

Tina Augustus – Resident of Austin/Austin Chamber of Commerce

Lauren Price – 29th Ward Representative

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD BIKE NETWORK

David Smith, Bicycle & Pedestrian Program Manager, from the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) introduced the Neighborhood Bike Network initiative to the Taskforce and provided an overview of the state of bicycling in Chicago. In 2021, the city's bikeshare program, Divvy, will be expanding into the community and there is a need to provide people with the option to bike by creating safe, dedicated places to ride. David stressed the importance and benefits of biking that will only be convenient if there is a safe, connected neighborhood network that is supported by the community.

Racial Equity Impact Assessment

The Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) will help guide this effort. An REIA is a series of questions to help understand the impacts of a project (both positive and negative), especially as they relate to minority populations and those who have previously been underrepresented or left out of the decision-making process. These questions will help guide our conversations throughout the process. At the end of this effort, CDOT will develop a report to summarize the process and findings.

Outcomes

With help from the Taskforce, CDOT is looking to identify and design approximately 10 miles for a bicycle network in 2021 and develop recommendations for longer term projects. The Taskforce will also help develop other recommendations to making biking safe, convenient, and appealing to the neighborhood. This network, along with other recommendations from the Taskforce, will be used to make biking a viable form of transportation for all ages and abilities.

Timeline

The Neighborhood Bike Network process is meant to allow for meaningful conversations with the Taskforce and the Austin community while still moving quickly. The primary objective of this effort is to identify, design, and install bicycle infrastructure in Austin in 2021. This is the first of three Taskforce meetings, but other interim touchpoints and meetings will be scheduled.

WHAT TRANSPORTATION RELATED INITIATIVES IS YOUR GROUP WORKING ON IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

Task members responded that they've seen a growth of people biking over the years and groups have participated in community bike rides. They are supportive of new and improved infrastructure. Community led plans both **Invest South/West** and the **Austin Quality of Life Plan** are being used to guide a community vision.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Who's not here that should be? Who should we make sure we engage?

Task members gave a detailed list of additional groups to involve with this process. Reaching out to the **youth population** through after school programs, **educational networks and sports network** will be key. There is also a strong network of block clubs where people are involved in community policing efforts. Members also suggested working the Austin Chamber of Commerce to contact local businesses. CDOT noted they will follow up with members to get contact information and begin the engagement process.

Other groups to contact:

- By the Hand Club
- My Chi My Austin
- Territory
- West Town Bikes
- South Austin Neighborhood Association
- Austin Veterans Group
- Columbus Park Advisory Council

What is the best way we can reach out to people in your neighborhood?

Members of the taskforce strongly responded that Austin is a community that is **based about relationships**. They emphasized that having the right relationships with **trusted community leaders** is the only way to effectively get your message out. This taskforce is a good block of those leaders, but more, including the groups referenced above, will need to be added, especially the youth. Other community efforts involve **neighborhood meetings** and “**collaborative meetings**” where information can be shared with people they encounter and strengthen ties with one another. Connecting residents to information where they can get their own personal bike would help generate support for both the neighborhood network and future community bike rides.

Who is currently biking in your neighborhood?

Although there has been a growing number of people biking in the community over the years including many **youth**, many people seen riding are perceived as **riding solely through the community** to connect Oak Park to Chicago. To encourage residents to bike, more bicycle infrastructure should be built on neighborhood streets that connect to community assets and encourage people to stay and visit within Austin.

Perceptions and barriers of biking in the neighborhood?

Some of the biggest barriers people in the community perceive to bicycling involves **safety, connectivity, and visibility** according to the taskforce. Members cited concerns over sharing space on narrow one-way streets and interacting with disrespectful vehicles. There is also a lack of safe neighborhood bicycle infrastructure to reach their end destinations. Small business owners in the community typically are worried about any perceived impacts to street parking or vehicle operations that any potential bicycle infrastructure may cause.

What streets are important to your neighborhood and why?

Streets that connect to neighborhood assets, such as **parks**, and improve access into **nearby communities** should be prioritized. Creating more east-west and north-south options will help **erase the invisible lines** between communities and create neighborhood routes. The Austin area is full of prominent and historic architecture and connecting bike rides to these unique assets only found in Austin can help build community identify with biking. Additionally, Chicago Avenue was identified as a Priority Corridor in the Invest South/West plan

Other streets mentioned

- Laramie
- Roosevelt
- Menard
- Kinzie

- Washington
- Jackson
- Harrison
- Madison

What are the important destinations and connections in your neighborhood?

Connecting to community assets within Austin and to the **neighboring communities** are all seen as vital destinations. Public spaces such as **Columbus Park** and the various public **libraries** are important community staples. Although there are limited options within the Primary Study Area, access to grocery stores is difficult and connections need to be prioritized. There are plans for a future grocery at Chicago/Waller.

Other Important Destinations

- BUILD
- Lorretto Hospital
- Laramie State Bank